

The Lakeview Lamp

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” -
Psalm 119:105*

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Do You Teach an Edifying Class?

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How many times have you sat in a class in which you were bored to tears? In fact, you felt the urge to ignore what the teacher was saying and do your own personal study? Or, how many times have you as a teacher been teaching a class in which you knew the class was so dull that halfway through you wanted to run and hide? Poor Bible classes are one of the greatest hindrances to a church that desires to grow.

Paul's main theme in **I Cor. 14** is that all things are to be done to the edification of the church. Bible classes are usually one or the other: uplifting and encouraging or depressing and discouraging. If classes are continually discouraging, then the class is pointless and hurts the overall work of the church. Boring classes will deter unbelieving visitors from returning as well as hinder new membership. We are being disobedient to God if we do not do what is necessary to have an uplifting class.

The following are some things that teachers can do to make their classes an edifying experience:

1. To be a good teacher you must love the Word and love to learn the Word. If you find yourself hurrying through a text, doing a cursory, quick study, then your class is going to reflect that. If you find your study tedious and uninviting, then you will teach a similar kind of class. As you prepare for your class you

should be finding a number of points that make you respond with “Oh Wow! Isn’t that interesting!” If that is not happening you will teach a dull class.

Consider some simple steps that will help you know and love the text:

Begin with the text itself, not a commentary. Beginning with a commentary will dull your brain quickly. God’s word is interesting, commentaries generally aren’t. Generate a photo copy of the text you are going to study or acquire a cheap large print Bible that you don’t mind marking up with colored pencils and notes. The pencil is the best eyes you have. If you are not studying with a pencil, you aren’t studying! Spend at least an hour with the text and nothing but the text.

Circle phrases, words and verses you don’t understand. If you think you understand everything in a text, you probably have not studied very carefully. Go back and look at the text again and find things you have questions about. These will become some of your main questions for the class.

Find the answers to your questions. You do this by first considering all the possible explanations and eliminating the ones that would be contradictory to the context or other texts. After doing this, pay special attention to the context at hand and what the intention of the writer is. Once you have exhausted your own study, check some commentaries to get a different perspective. Though commentaries are not the first place you should look, if you are going to be a good teacher you need to consider varying viewpoints.

Find things in the text you would like to know more about. For example, if you are studying the parable of the ten virgins, you will want to know the customs of the east as pertains to wedding ceremonies.

Write down the main point(s) the author was trying to get across. All the details of a text that you might discover are meaningless if they are not connected to some general purpose or lesson. When you are teaching, you will need to make sure the class never loses sight of these main points. For example, in **I Cor.2:13** Paul stresses that his words came from the Holy Spirit and not from his own human wisdom. This is a perfect verse to teach verbal inspiration. But more importantly, we need to discover how these words fit into Paul’s argument to the Corinthians. Without the broader view, Paul’s teaching does not carry the intended impact.

Write down everything in the text you find interesting. Here is where you focus

your eyes and allow your mind to be saturated with the details of the text. To me, this is the part of study that is like eating the dessert. I am trying to probe every inch of God's revealed mind. Developing good observation skills takes time and practice. Most of us are simply not very good observers. Consider this: how many of us would have concluded the resurrection from the words, "*I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?*" Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for not seeing it!

(To be continued next week.)

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed."— Psalm 71:23

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).